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Wales step closer to new EU funding

Plaid MEP comments on EU structural funds

As the European Commission today (Wednesday) publishes further details of the next round of cohesion funding after 2013, Plaid MEP **Jill Evans** has warned of the dangers of complacency in preparing for this third opportunity of top level EU funding.

Ms Evans said the economic crisis made it increasingly urgent for the Labour government in Wales to plan for the effective use of European funding. The Plaid MEP questioned the Labour Government's readiness to maximise this third opportunity of top level funding.

Plaid Cymru is highly critical of the Labour government's failure to respond to the serious challenges facing the Welsh economy. Their programme of government and this week's budget statement contained little detail, and no vision for getting the best from European funding to help create jobs.

Jill Evans MEP said:

"West Wales and the Valleys is set to receive a third round of top level EU funding because the area is more than twenty-five per cent poorer than the European average. This is a scandal. Our poorest communities are getting poorer. We have to do things differently. We have to concentrate this new funding on creating local, sustainable jobs. Small companies need support to grow and we have massive potential for developing renewable energy. National and local government must recognise the link between a strong economy and a sustainable community and urgently develop a green jobs strategy to provide the right skills and expertise needed.

"This Labour government has no real ambition or vision for Wales. This is painfully obvious when it comes to European funding.

"Current funding has brought £1.5 billion to the Welsh economy, that has helped create over 5000 jobs and 1,300 new enterprises. But in the Welsh Government's programme for government, European funding was barely mentioned.

"I am pleased that the European Commission has recognised the need to simplify the applications process and make it more effective. This has been one of my main complaints in the past. Organisations who wanted to

access the funding found it too difficult. Effective co-operation between the Welsh government and the European Commission on this key question will be vital over the coming months."

Jill Evans added:

"I am, however, highly sceptical about how the proposals for sanctions in distributing the structural funds will actually work. We are told by the Commission that this would only be a last resort if member states violate deficit and debt thresholds. My main concern would be that deserving cases for European funding such as Wales could miss out through no fault of our own. That would go against the whole spirit of the structural funds and this needs to be looked at with a very critical eye."

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Responsible MEPs



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